THE GLOBE AND MAIL

SE National

HD **Evening Update: Former AER head diverted funds to side project; feds challenge human rights tribunal; Also: Trump hints White House won't co-operate with impeachment probe, Scheer lays out guns plan and Bianca loses**

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Good evening, let's start with today's top stories:

Former CEO of Alberta Energy Regulator diverted public funds to consultancy project, investigation finds

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The former CEO of Alberta's energy regulator set up a pricey side project that diverted resources, money and employee time from the agency while concealing many of the details from the board of directors, provincial investigations have concluded . As Jeffrey Jones and Justin Giovannetti report from Calgary, the findings from Alberta's public interest commissioner (PIC), Ethics Commissioner and Office of the Attorney-General said Jim Ellis grossly mismanaged public funds when he set up an operation called the International Centre of Regulatory Excellence, or ICORE. Further, he mismanaged public assets and services by misappropriating intellectual property. The reports shows how senior officials at the energy regulator were distracted from the agency's crucial main tasks of vetting and approving energy projects as the industry's financial fortunes dwindled and the province struggled with a rising tide of environmental liabilities tied to aging oil and gas wells.

The reports found:

* ICORE charged other jurisdictions, including Mexico, for its services, but also used the resources of the AER in delivering them

* Mr. Ellis sought to commercialize a computer-based regulatory system that had been developed at the AER

* More than 50 AER employees were seconded to ICORE's development over a number of years, including two senior executives who were moved full-time to the private company

* A significant amount of travel for ICORE was also conducted on the public dime, disguised internally as "AER reputation building"

* Over three years, Mr. Ellis and a senior AER executive billed the AER more than $200,000 in airfare and hotel bills for ICORE work.

* ICORE is estimated to have cost the AER $5.4-million, of which $3.1-million has so far been collected.

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Federal government challenges human rights tribunal on Indigenous children welfare ruling

Federal lawyers have filed an application for a judicial review of a ruling last month by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal that called on Ottawa to compensate Indigenous children unnecessarily taken into child welfare after 2006. The Tribunal's ruling on Sept. 6 said the federal government wilfully and recklessly discriminated against Indigenous children living on reserve by failing to provide funding for child and family services. The government had 30 days from the ruling to decide whether it will accept it and pay the required compensation – up to $40,000 for as many as 54,000 First Nations children – or ask the Federal Court of Appeal for a judicial review to ensure that the tribunal's decision followed the law.

Trump formally objecting to impeachment inquiry, won't say he'll co-operate

It's been an eventful week in Washington, and that's saying something. Last night, The Globe's U.S. correspondent Adrian Morrow reported on the release by former Ukraine envoy Kurt Volker of several text messages that appears to show that several of Mr. Trump's advisers attempted to negotiate a meeting between the President and his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelensky, in exchange for Mr. Zelensky opening the investigation. Mr. Volker was testifying yesterday in front of a joint Congressional committee's impeachment inquiry.

Today, the President said the White House is preparing a letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi formally objecting to the impeachment inquiry . He said the administration won't co-operate with the probe without the full consent of Congress, which would require majority votes in the House of Representatives, controlled by the Democrats, and the Senate, controlled by Republicans.

Also today, the House Intelligence Committee questioned the intelligence community watchdog who first fielded the whistle-blower complaint that has spurred a formal impeachment inquiry.

* Opinion: (Lawrence Martin) By calling on China, Trump hands Democrats an impeachment gift

Scheer vows to bring in mandatory minimums for smuggled guns if elected

This morning in Toronto Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer announced if elected his party would bring in a new five-year mandatory prison sentence for individuals who possess smuggled firearms, as well as a five-year mandatory minimum for violent gang crime. He also promised to create a task force to intercept illegal firearms at the Canada-U.S. border.

Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau, who was campaigning today in Quebec City, described the Conservative proposal as an attempt "to weaken gun control" while the Liberals want to "strengthen gun control" with their plan to ban and buy back up to 250,000 military-style assault rifles in addition to letting municipalities impose individual handgun bans.

The New Democrats have promise to do more to stop gun-smuggling, and the Greens say they would further restrict handguns to shooting ranges in urban areas.

Further reading: Gun violence in Canada, the missing data and what federal leaders are pledging

Also on the election front today:

* The races: 21 ridings to watch from coast to coast

* Explainer: Where do the parties stand on taxes and deficits?

* Opinion: "In four years, the Liberals have made scant progress on the politically tricky cultural file, but as they head into this month's federal election, that may be changing." – Kate Taylor

ALSO ON OUR RADAR

Bianca Andreescu finally saw her WTA Tour season-high win streak of 17 matches come to an end with a 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 loss to Japan's Naomi Osaka. The Mississauga teen, ranked 6th in the world, suffered her first

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loss in nine matches this season against a top-10 opponent and saw her streak of 13 consecutive wins in three-set matches halted.

Airline bankruptcies have increased this year at the fastest ever rate, led by the collapse of India's Jet Airways, British travel group Thomas Cook and Avianca of Brazil, according to industry data published today.

An internal investigation has found that there was improper access to more than 2,000 patient electronic health records at Alberta Public Laboratories clinical lab at the Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre with most belonging to emergency patients. A total of 30 staff were reportedly involved in the breach. Three are no longer employed by the lab.

A Quebec law firm is seeking authorization to launch a class-action lawsuit against the makers of Fortnite , alleging it is highly addictive and can cause health problems. The filing is on behalf of two plaintiffs – parents of Quebec children, who are 10 and 15 and described as highly dependent on the video game.

Céline Dion is postponing two more shows in Montreal owing to a throat virus, rescheduling them for Feb. 18 and 19, 2020. Last week, Dion announced she had to postpone four separate Montreal performances owing to doctor's orders that she take a week off to rest and recover from the illness.

MARKET WATCH

The close: Easing concerns about U.S. economy lift equity markets

A report showing a modest increase in U.S. jobs lifted world equity benchmarks broadly on Friday , restoring calm after one of the worst weeks for stocks in months. The TSX rose nearly half a percentage point. News of the U.S. unemployment rate falling to a 50-year low in September, eased worries over a potential U.S. recession after weak data earlier this week showed a slowdown in U.S. manufacturing and services.

On Wall Street, the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 371.63 points, or 1.42%, to 26,572.67, the S&P 500 gained 41.28 points, or 1.42%, to 2,951.91 and the Nasdaq Composite added 110.21 points, or 1.4%, to 7,982.47.

The S&P/TSX composite index closed up 80.32 points at 16,449.35.

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TALKING POINTS

Meghan Markle storms the castle of institutional racism

"This week, Harry and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, announced that they'd be suing The Daily Mail for reprinting parts of a letter the Duchess had written to her estranged father. But that article was just the tip of a poisoned spear, one bitter barb in a year-long tabloid campaign to establish that the Duchess is profligate, haughty and self-aggrandizing. In short, an unwelcome outsider." – Elizabeth Renzetti

Germany shows us how to thrive in an economic downturn

"For the first time in more than a decade, [Germany] has just experienced a quarter of economic decline, driven by a steep fall in worldwide demand for cars and other exports. Some economists are predicting a second quarter of loss – a recession. When the world's third-largest national economy slides into a downturn, the whole world watches. But we should take notes. Germany has developed a number of shrewd systems to prevent people from being hurt by a changing economy." – Doug Saunders

As Pope Francis calls for climate action, his critics fear a green Trojan horse

"But the synod, years in the making, has become a lightning rod for opposition to the pope. Ultraconservative prelates are all aligned in their resistance to a pontificate they perceive as too accommodating to contemporary trends, too obliging in watering down sound doctrine in the interest of compromise, too unsure of the absolutism of thought and behaviour they find comforting and orthodox." — Michael Higgins is distinguished professor of Catholic thought at Sacred Heart University in Connecticut, a senior fellow of Massey College and an award-winning biographer.

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LIVING BETTER

New films in theatres and streaming this week

The much-anticipated Joker doesn't live up to the hype, while the documentary Where's My Roy Cohn? tracks the rise of a vain and tactless fame-chasing New Yorker who might remind you of someone else. Read more reviews in The Globe's weekly guide to the latest openings .

Ever dated a sapiosexual?

In September, music producer Mark Ronson said that he identifies as sapiosexual – someone who is primarily attracted to intelligence over physical appearance – in a headline-making interview with ITV's Good Morning Britain, igniting a debate about the increasingly popular term. Many wondered: is sapiosexuality real , or simply a pretentious buzzword that describes a preference so common it hardly needs its own term? In the often-superficial world of online dating, sapiosexuals say identifying as such helps them declare their interests to potential partners.

LONG READ FOR A LONG COMMUTE

John le Carré's new book is a spy tale for our times

"You look haunted," John le Carré says to The Globe's senior international correspondent, Mark MacKinnon, as he welcomes him in the front hall of his stately 19th-century home in north London. He doesn't wait for a reply. "I'm haunted. Who wouldn't be? I can't believe what's going on."

What haunts the lanky 87-year-old spy-turned-novelist: Brexit, and specifically the "children" – as he repeatedly calls British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his cabinet – who are carrying it out. "He is totally without principle," le Carré says of Johnson, before widening his range of targets to include Donald Trump and his personality-centred rule in the United States. "We are really being so lied to by our own, and we are inflicting so much damage on ourselves, in the name of something that no one can quite put their finger on."

Agent Running in the Field, le Carré's 25th novel, is about Brexit, Trump and the charged geopolitical moment that we're in. It's set so much in the present that it risks feeling old the day after – if? – Brexit happens. (The book is due to be published on Oct. 22, nine days before Britain is currently due to leave the European Union.) The author's fury surges through its characters, including narrator Nat, a middle-aged spy who has recently been brought home to London after a series of postings in Russia and Eastern Europe. (Read Mark MacKinnon's full story here .)

Today's Evening Update was produced by Michael Snider and Lori Fazari. If you'd like to receive this newsletter by e-mail every weekday evening, go here to sign up. If you have any feedback, send us a note .

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